

Boswell story hits sweet note

THEATER REVIEW

By **RICHARD DODDS**

The career of the Boswell Sisters is not exactly the stuff of great drama, so it takes a little time to fall into the low-key rhythms of "Sing, Sister, Sing," the new musical at the Pitt Theater. Yet once you get acclimated, perhaps somewhere in the middle of the first act, this retrospective show about the popular New Orleans singing trio of the '30s displays a lulling charm.

The presentation is fittingly simple. The year is 1935, when the Boswells were at their height, and the sisters are telling the story of their career during a remote radio broadcast from their parents' home on Camp Street. Vet, Connie (later Connee) and Martha takes turns telling anecdotes of their rise to fame, and while the stories do ring with the authority of the research done by the show's creators, the words are merely the connective tissue for what the Boswells were all about. That, obviously, is music.

More than two dozen musical numbers have been incorporated into "Sing, Sister, Sing," and who better to sing them than the Pfister Sisters, a trio

which has spent the past few years singing around New Orleans in the style of the Boswells. The Pfisters are Yvette M. Voelker, Holly Bendtsen and Suzy Malone, and respectively they play Vet, Connie and Martha Boswell. (Steve Vaughan completes the cast in a variety of small roles.)

With their considerable prior experience in singing Boswellian harmonies, the ladies cut through the music with the ease of a warm knife through butter. Even on difficult rapid-fire tunes or those with complex harmonies, the three women don't hit a false note. However, their reading of the somewhat stilted dialogue written by Andrué Scott (who also directed) and David W. McCain is not yet so smooth.

The vocal direction is credited to Annina Menotti, and the musical arrangements are by Amasa Miller, who crisply plays the piano accompaniment in the first act before being joined by a lively little jazz combo in the second.

"Sing, Sister, Sing," which runs through March 25, may tell you more than you ever thought you wanted to know about the Boswell Sisters, but it's obviously been assembled and performed by folks who love their subject.

Repertory Cinema
6201 Elysian Fields 288-1611

LOUIE MILES
PRETTY BABY 9:15 (R)
JUDY GARLAND
A STAR IS BORN
7:30 (PG)
ON STAGE
SING SISTER SING
STARTS THUR. 8 P.M.